DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 280 195 EA 019 319

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TITLE Major Contrasts in the Social Climates of Two High Schools in the Same Town.
PUB DATE 21 Apr 87
NOTE 38p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Washington, DC, April 20-24, 1987).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; *Comparative Testing; Curriculum; Governance; Group Behavior; High Schools; *Nontraditional Education; Responsibility; School Activities; *School Organization; Self Esteem; Social Control; *Social Environment; *Social Influences; Teacher Student Relationship

ABSTRACT

The social climates of two markedly different high schools are examined in this study. Although both schools reside in the same district and have the same community standards, they are different in curriculum concepts, problem-solving strategies, and size. The two schools, one a typical high school and one a smaller public alternative high school, are studied using interviews and two other sources of data. The implications of these findings regarding the schools' organizational structures are discussed. Both schools are found to meet students' needs, and both are stable. The two schools are compared in terms of the student sense of community, teachers, school structures, curricula and programs, and student performance. The effects on overall social climate of cliques within the school and of control exercised over the students are discussed in detail. On the basis of state scores on a variety of evaluation instruments, including self-esteem, understanding others, societal responsibility, and appreciating human accomplishments, the public alternative school is drastically superior. Reasons for this discrepancy are postulated. Programmatic issues are also examined. Eight references, four figures, and two tables are included. (WTH)

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Major Contrasts in the Social Climates of Two High Schools in the Same Town

By

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting
of the
American Educational Research Association
Washington, D.C.
April 21, 1987

EA 019 319

A B S T R A C T

Major Contrasts in the Social Climates of
Two High Schools in the Same Town

The study examines the social climates of two markedly different high schools. Both reside in the same school district and are subject to the same policies and community standards. Nevertheless, they have purposely tried to develop programs that differ markedly from one another in how they conceptualize curriculum, in how they solve control problems, and in their social climates.

One school, a conventional high school, contained approximately 1000 students and 65 teachers while the other, a public alternative high school with a heterogenous student body, contained approximately 175 students and 10 teachers.

Three sources of data were used, but the primary one was 10 days of interviews conducted with 54 students, 20 teachers, and four administrators.

Interview data strongly suggest that these schools had very different social climates. Regarding student relationships, the conventional high school was dominated by a set of cliques with strong social class identifications while the alternative school was characterized by small friendship groups. Teacher-student relationships were also quite different in the two schools, with most, but not all, relationships in the conventional high school being more formal and constrained.

The paper discusses the implications of these findings regarding the organizational structures of the two high schools.

Many factors are acknowledged to impact on the social climate of a school. Clearly, socio-economic composition and school size are such factors. Other, perhaps equally potent, factors are far more subtle. Some are embedded in the culture of the school and become evident only when one examines social issues in the context of that culture. Under these circumstances, the impact that different levels of control and trust, different definitions of teachers' and students' roles, different school governance patterns, and so on become evident. The study reported here contrasts the social climates of two markedly different high schools (1). Both are subject to the same policies, standards, and expectations of the community in which they reside. Both operate under the same funding. Yet they have become two quite different expressions of "high school" and their social climates reflect these differences. It is these differences, as seen through an examination of these two schools, that provide the focus for this study.

The Two Schools

One of the two schools is a typical, large high school--hereafter, we will call it the "High School." Despite our descriptor, its 1000 students and 70 or so teachers make it small by comprehensive high school standards. In our judgment, it is a fine example of its type. It reflects the high academic standards of its teachers and the university community in which it resides. Many of its teachers and, we suspect, the community in general view it as one of the best high schools in the state. Most neutral observers probably would agree. Its faculty is well trained in the school's various academic offerings and its progressive administrators set high expectations. Its curriculum is like that of most high schools, offering a breadth of courses including those at advanced levels in several areas. English, social studies, the sciences, mathematics and foreign languages constitute the "basics." Its programs in art, music and sports receive state-wide attention.

The second school, a public alternative high school, available by choice to all the students in the community, is housed in a portion of an elementary school. Hereafter, we will call it the "Alternative." Like most alternative schools, it is small, its students numbering about 175 and its faculty about 12. It has no varsity sports, no large musical performance groups, and a much more limited range of formal course offerings (2).

Size is not the only difference between these schools for the alternative school has consciously chosen to embrace a quite different philosophy, curriculum, and governance structure. The attitudes of these two schools' students and teachers, though from common class and community backgrounds, are quite different. They represent much of the explanation for the markedly different educational practices we observed in each school. We cannot escape the conclusion that what we experienced in these two

schools was two quite different expressions of social climate that arose from two different school cultures.

The town in which these two schools reside is unusual in at least one respect. A major university in this eastern state dominates the community's economy and politics. This college town of about 40,000 inhabitants is surrounded by rolling farm land. The heterogeneous mix of professors' children, town kids, and farm youths gives the town's schools a special flavor. Making this mix of students function harmoniously within the schools is a major challenge for teachers (3).

Our first contact with these two schools was through a study of the social climates of "sister" schools (Gregory & Smith, 1983). In all, the study examined 24 schools in 11 communities in 10 states. Our Statements About Schools Inventory (Smith, Gregory & Pugh, 1981a) (described below) was employed to compare the ways in which pairs of schools, one a conventional and one an alternative high school in the same community, meet the needs of their students. Indeed, we found large and intriguing differences, not only in their climates but in many other areas. We came to realize how different schools can be--even schools in the same community--when given the opportunity.

Two of the schools in that earlier study sere selected for more intense examination in this study. These two schools had developed programs that differed markedly from one another in climate and in how they solve control problems and we wanted to understand the nature of these differences.

Procedures

In May, 1982, we spent one week collecting data, observing and interviewing participants in these two schools. Additional data had been collected the previous year as a part of the sister school study. Three very different kinds of data were collected:

SAS Data

First, we had the results of two testings of the schools using our Statements About Schools Inventory, a measure of social climate containing four scales:

- The SECURITY Scale measures students' needs for a stable, orderly, controlled environment that fosters a sense of well-being.
- The SOCIAL Scale focuses on students' needs for friendship with both peers and adults in the high school setting.
- The ESTEEM Scale measures students' needs to feel capable, worthw ile, and important.

- The SELF-ACTUALIZATION Scale focuses on students' needs to become more fully functioning, loving, and caring people.

The SAS, under development for two years, received its final field test in 1980 and has proven to be a valid (r's=.70 to .78) and reliable (Cronbach's alphas=.83 to .97) instrument. Four, ten-item scales corresponding to the four highest levels of the Maslow needs hierarchy (1954) form the SAS. To date, almost 100 schools in over 20 states form the norm group on which a school's raw scores are standardized. Earlier studies employing the SAS (e.g., Smith, Gregory & Pugh, 1981b and Gregory & Smith, 1983) have yielded marked differences in the degree to which alternative and conventional high schools meet students' needs.

In completing the SAS, students and teachers respond to a set of 40 items twice, once to describe their school as it actually operates and once to desribe how their ideal school would function. A comparison of these two views yields an approximate measure of a person's satisfaction with the school in which he or she works. Aggregating the data for all the students or teachers in a given school, then, gives us a general picture of how well the school is working, at least on the dimensions that the SAS probes. All told, SAS data for this study were collected from 446 students and 124 teachers in the two separate testings.

Interviews

The second, and most important, source of data was the approximately 50 hours of recorded interviews we conducted with students and teachers in the two schools. Individual or small group interviews were conducted with 54 students, 20 teachers, and four administrators. We also conversed less formally with dozens of other participants in the two programs.

The interviews, all of which were condeucted by the two of us, were preceeded by considerable planning; while the tape-recorded interviews were open-ended, questioning usually followed a pre-established pattern. Interviews almost always focused on a discussion of climate issues and how the school supported the development of strong relationships and individual achievement. We switched schools at midweek and spent several hours each evening, listening to excerpts of each other's tapes, discussing emerging themes, and deciding directions in which to take the next day's interviews.

The interview tapes were transcribed into 375 pages of typescript. Interview segments were then collated into major themes and two- to five-page papers were written on each theme. From these, a 47 page preliminary summary of findings was developed and reactions to it were solicited from key personnel in both schools. A final report to both schools was then prepared and distributed to all teachers and administrators in

the two schools. General reactions to the report continued to be collected informally over several months.

Performance Data

Third, we were given access to the state evaluations conducted in two successive years. The second of these had been completed just prior to our interviews. The results became available to us several months later. The state assessment contains a battery of 14 measures of the overall performance of the students in a school (3):

- SELF-ESTEEM: Students are asked to relate their feelings of success and acceptance--primarily in the school setting.
- UNDERSTANDING OTHERS: Students are asked to respond to approaches and interactions with persons of differing skin color, religious beliefs, physical characteristics, socio-economic status or cultural tradition.
- COMMUNICATION SKILLS: READING: Includes items assessing both literal and inferential comprehension.
- COMMUNICATION SKILLS: WRITING: Includes items assessing mechanics and usage, sentence sense, paragraph sense, style, tone, and flavor.
- MATHEMATICS: Items measure mathematical concepts, computation, and/or problem-solving.
- INTEREST IN SCHOOL AND LEARNING: Students display their feelings on the climate and learning atmosphere in the school.
- SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY: Students are asked if they will assume responsibility for their actions and the actions of groups to which they belong.
- KNOWLEDGE OF LAW/GOVERNMENT: Tests knowledge of government, of law, and of the interdependence of people.
- HEALTH AND SAFETY PRACTICES: Students demonstrate the degree to which they have acquired habits and attitudes which increase the probability of remaining healthy, safe, and fit throughout life.
- CREATIVE ACTIVITIES: Students are asked to indicate how frequently they participate in five areas: visual arts, performing arts, writing, science, and social and practical studies.

- CAREER AWARENESS: Items assess students' awareness of duties, training, abilities, and educational requirements of various occupations.

- APPRECIATING HUMAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Students indicate their willingness to engage in listening, watching, or reading activities relating to significant accomplishments.

- KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Students demonstrate their recognition of persons, theories or ideas, works, inventions, or phenomena.

- INFORMATION USAGE: Students are asked to show that they are able to examine problems in a logical way, to identify them properly, to seek whatever information is needed to establish facts, to be aware of the consequences of decisions, and to choose courses of action congruent with their own values and desires.

Clearly, these 14 measures assess much of what most would commonly term, "the school program." For us, they paint the sort of comprehensive picture of these schools that completes important elements of this portrayal.

Findings

How did these schools fare when we compared and contrasted them through these three sets of procedures? The remainder of this paper is devoted to answering this question.

SAS Results

The SAS results for the two testings of these two schools are presented graphically in the scatter-plot graphs displayed in Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4. Each figure displays the results for one of the SAS needs levels. Each data point represents the intersection of the mean "actual" and "ideal" scores for all the teachers or students in one of the two schools, converted into standard scores (mean=50, standard deviation=10) (4). Teachers' scores reflect their view of how the school meets their students' needs, not their own. If the actual and ideal scores are in agreement (i.e., the respondents are well-satisfied) their data point will fall in or near the diagonal path of each figure. The two data points for each of the four respondent groups represent the results of the two testings a year apart.

Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4

SAS Results for the Two Schools

Figure 1: SECURITY Scale

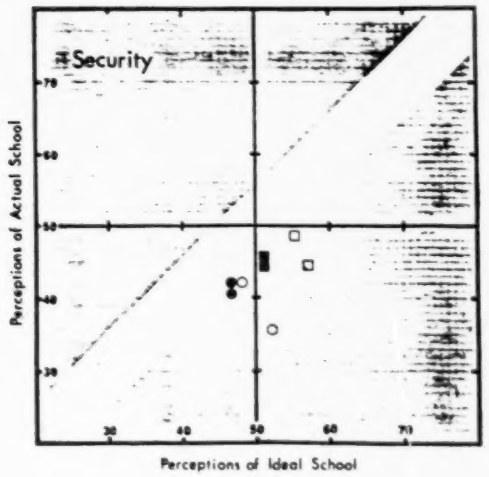


Figure 2: SOCIAL Scale

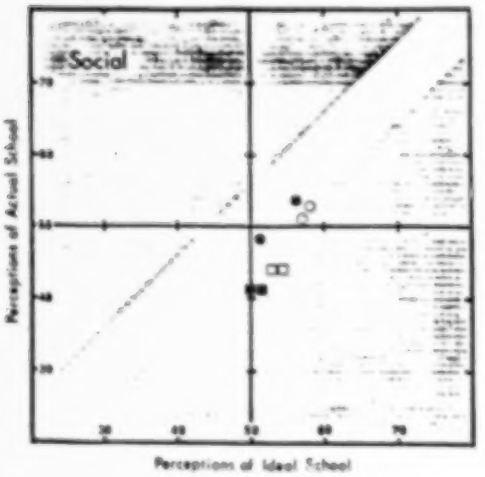


Figure 3: ESTEEM Scale

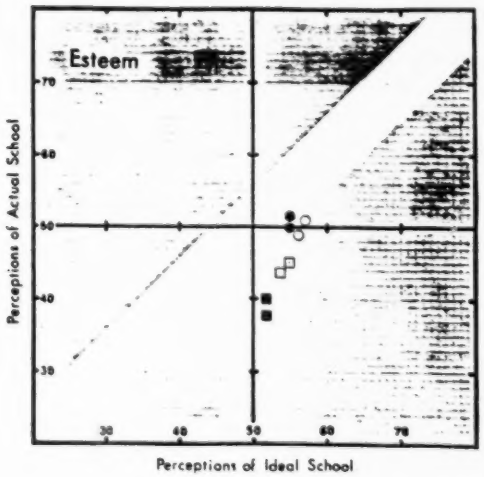
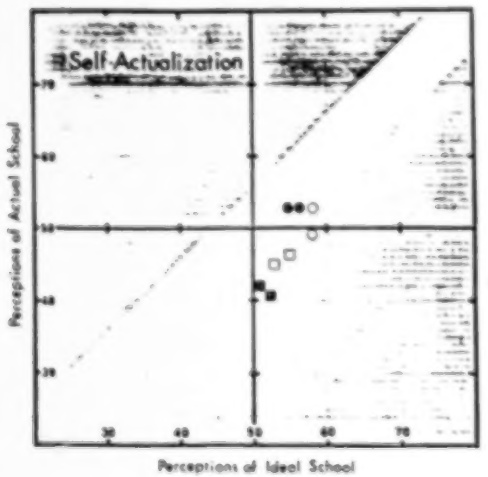


Figure 4: SELF-ACTUALIZATION Scale



■ The High School's Students ● The Alternative School's Students

□ The High School's Teachers ○ The Alternative School's Teachers

To answer the question of how different these two social climates are, ANOVA comparisons of students' and teachers' SAS responses in the two schools on the first of these two testings. The results of these comparisons are summarized in Table 1. (We judged the presentation of the similar results of the second testing as complicating the discussion more than they shed additional light on the comparisons.) Unlike Figures 1 through 4, the means in Table 1 are not standardized. The range of raw scores possible on any scale is 40 (from 10 to 50). Five observations are evident in these data:

First, both schools meet students' needs well. We made the point early on but will reinforce it here: these are two good schools and their SAS results support that assessment.

Second, an inspection of the four figures suggests that there is considerable stability evident in the scores of these two schools across the two years of testing, this despite major environmental changes in each school between testings. The High School eliminated its sophomore class and the Alternative moved from a building in which it was essentially the only resident to a building it now shares with an elementary school. Yet, the climate factors the SAS taps were relatively unchanged.

Third, the scores of students and teachers in each school are in considerable agreement. In a sense, the two groups in each school validate each other's perceptions. Imagine, as a contrast, the despair of a situation in which teachers view the school with much greater regard than their students. These two schools' environments may be imperfect, but they are nevertheless healthy.

Fourth, the differences between schools, especially for students, are, statistically, quite significant (p's typically < .0001). Table 1 and Figures 1 through 4 indicate that these differences are, for teachers, more a product of differences in actual practice (about two standard deviations difference) than in the ideals their inhabitants hold (about one standard deviation difference). Regarding ideals, the Alternative's students hold a significantly higher ideal on the top three SAS scales. The pattern reverses on the Security Scale. The self-selection that allows students--perhaps of a particular philosophic bent--to opt into the Alternative may be one explanation for these very different ideals. An equally plausible explanation may be that the very different schooling practices we are describing here may be "teaching" students to have very different expectations for the social climate of a school.

Table 1

ANOVA Comparisons of Students' and Teachers' Estimates of How Well Their Respective Schools Meet Students' Needs

Scale	Students: / Teachers:	High School (N = 109) (N = 72) $\bar{X}$	sd	Alternative (N = 111) (N = 8) $\bar{X}$	sd	F	p
Students' View of Actual School:							
Security		34.82	5.95	32.10	5.68	12.02	.001
Social		29.59	6.22	43.71	5.15	337.01	.0001
Esteem		27.96	6.14	42.35	5.28	347.55	.0001
Self-Actualization		32.26	6.82	44.33	4.59	238.30	.0001
Students' View of Ideal School:							
Security		39.26	6.07	36.13	5.77	15.37	.0001
Social		42.10	6.87	47.02	3.64	44.23	.0001
Esteem		44.12	6.41	47.13	3.45	18.87	.0001
Self-Actualization		43.00	6.07	47.15	3.79	37.24	.0001
Teachers' View of Actual School:							
Security		33.96	6.85	27.00	7.98	7.20	.001
Social		33.88	6.02	42.25	3.45	14.83	.001
Esteem		35.35	5.93	40.75	3.85	6.30	.01
Self-Actualization		36.07	6.38	40.75	5.68	3.95	.05
Teachers' View of Ideal School:							
Security		43.76	6.72	39.86	5.67	2.47	NS
Social		44.40	4.85	48.25	2.05	4.90	.05
Esteem		45.40	4.88	48.13	3.00	2.37	NS
Self-Actualization		44.83	4.81	48.88	3.18	5.36	.05

Teachers present a very different picture in a similar comparison. For teachers, the degree to which a school should meet students' needs is commonly held across the schools to a much greater extent. The Alternative just does a better job of approaching this ideal. In this regard, the Alternative's teachers would appear to be a much more satisfied group than their High School counterparts.

Fifth, the Alternative's students are the most satisfied of these four groups. Their mean Actual and Ideal scores are typically only about four points apart (see Table 1), less than half the disagreement of the High School's students. In Figures 1 through 4, only one of the Alternative's students' eight scores misses the "satisfaction diagonal" and that is a bare miss. While the separation is less complete, the High School's students are, by a slight margin, the least satisfied of these four groups.

Interviews

The interviews provided a rich mother lode of material on the character and characteristics of these two schools. They helped us understand what life was like in them, the ups and downs of their chief characters (students and teachers) and the twists and turns of their lives together. In a sense, they provided us with a chance to gaze deeply into the heart of the culture of each place.

The Sense of Community

Broadly speaking, American education may be thought of as trying to respond to two basic and, in some ways, conflicting values. One of these, individuality, leads a school to strive to enhance the unique talents, interests, and skills of each individual. The other, community, leads a school to strive to develop the sense that each person belongs to a group and feels some commitment to it. Each is responsible to the others for his or her actions. Both these schools tend to place more emphasis on individuality--though each interprets the concept somewhat differently--than on community. The Alternative's students and teachers speak more frequently--and intensely--about community than do their counterparts at the High School.

One of the most common themes in interviews conducted at the Alternative was the understanding and acceptance of diversity. Individuals can be different and yet still get along and appreciate the uniqueness of others. This sentiment contrasted sharply with the cliquishness (to be described more thoroughly later) that exists at the High School. There, each group tends to accept only a relatively narrow range of differences and speaks in negative terms about other groups in the school. One female student at the Alternative put the situation this way:

> There is a tendency to group there [at the High School] because there are so many people that you feel the need to belong with somebody all the time. At [the Alternative] you can be your own person and meet people as people and not as a group.

Despite the High School's cliques, students often emphasized individuality as a major theme. As one student said, "I came from the northeastern part of the state and there was unity [within] the school. I mean the classes worked together. Here, I think individuality is stressed more than the group. . . ." Another High School student stated, "Everybody's in their own group of friends and there's no mass attitude. Like everyone's either for yourself or yourself and a few other people." To put it another way, diversity at the Alternative seems based upon a respect for individual differences whereas diversity at the High School seems to exist between groups that are generally antagonistic toward each other.

There is a stronger sense of community at the Alternative. To begin with, teachers and students share a fairly harmonious set of values. At the High School, a much broader set of values exists and the differences between them are often difficult to reconcile. As a result, there is little foundation on which to build unity. The stronger sense of community at the Alternative is manifested in knowing each other's names, calling teachers by their first names, open-ended friendship groups (rather than closed cliques), and a sense of responsibility to the school as a community. Comments from two students express these qualities quite clearly:

> I certainly feel like it's [the Alternative] more of a family than any other school that I've gone to.

> Yeah, but it's [a sense of community] much more than I've ever felt at any other school.

A number of teachers at the High School experience a sense of isolation. While they make an effort to get acquainted with individual students, they apparently do not make the same effort to know each other. One teacher, who had been in the school for five years, received a telephone call from another teacher, asking her out on a date. Because she could not place a face with his name, she had to ask around to identify him before accepting the invitation.

The High School's teachers tend to interact within departmental groups, at least in part because the architecture of the school reinforces such associations. In contrasting the High School with another school--not the Alternative--a teacher spoke of the "individuality of teachers" at the High School and concluded that "teachers tend to be less team-oriented." Another described the low levels of interaction, and a third spoke about

". . . a lack of a sense of community in terms of faculty working together." It is not so much that faculty are split into two or more camps that are at odds with one another as it is that they tend to go their own ways. In contrast, only one person, of the 14 High School teachers we interviewed, said he enjoyed "the esprit de corps" or made any similar reference.

Both students and teachers acknowledge the value of a sense of community and both groups are aware that the administration is making an effort to do something about the problem. As one teacher said, "I know [that] one of the goals of the present administration is to try to create a sense of community among all students, faculty, and administration--everybody." Another teacher put it this way: "I think they're [the administrators] trying to mold. . .some kind of feeling for the school. They're trying to have the students have some kind of feeling that this is their school." That this teacher viewed community as an important goal for students but did not mention it as a need or goal for teachers may be symptomatic of the low sense of and expectations for community we sensed among the High School's faculty.

Teachers and Students

Because of differences in size and educational philosophy the teachers and students in both schools behave quite differently with their peers and members of the other group. Regarding teachers, we have concluded that we were observing two quite differing definitions of professionalism. The teachers at the High School believe in maintaining a certain amount of social distance between themselves and their students. They are open and friendly with students, speak to them casually about a great many matters, but they take care not to go "too far" in becoming "chummy" with students. Their role as teachers requires them to evaluate and pass judgment and becoming too close to students makes this task difficult to do with objectivity.

The Alternative's teachers take a different tack. They tend to view themselves, not so much as teachers, as resident adults, persons to whom students can turn if they have academic or personal problems. They try to break down the separation between students' and teachers' roles. Indeed, some classes are taught by students, and teachers may sit in on them as much to learn as to teach. Teachers breach the wall of separation by permitting students to call them by their first names, by dressing in clothes not that different from typical student garb, and by avoiding setting aside private space--such as a teachers' lounge--that is inaccessible to students. Like a family, all members of the community live in and share a communal space. The Alternative's size makes this arrangement workable. The easy, casual atmosphere that imbues the school is not something from which teachers feel a need to escape.

The Alternative's teachers go beyond these relatively superficial ways of destroying what they consider to be the artifical roles of student and teacher. Informal activities, such as picnics, field trips and overnights--where such roles hold little utility--occur frequently. Some teachers take this a step further, inviting students to their homes or going to movies or other activities with them. Whereas the High School's teachers deliberately, though not onerously maintain the separation between student and teacher, the Alternative's faculty work deliberately to eliminate it. They encourage students to take an active role in framing what they will study, how they will study it, and, upon completion, how they will evaluate it. While they adhere to the same state requirements and school board policies, as the High School, they do not seem to feel as bound to the standard curriculum. In this sense, they exercise considerable power over their professional lives, a condition that several of the recent reform reports recommend that all schools develop.

Structures

These two schools differ markedly in the way in which they conceptualize the space, time, content, and governance structures that affect their day-to-day experiences. Persons at the High School, both students and teachers, seem to feel more bound by existing structures. They are givens not to be tampered with, a necessary evil to getting the job done. At the Alternative, givens are more likely to be viewed as something that can and will be changed if the need arises.

The High School's teachers generally think of the classroom as the crucible of learning, the place where it all happens. If pressed, many would probably agree that learning can take place in other settings, but they do not embrace the concept seriously enough to work to make it a reality. Such changes are difficult in large institutions; there are more important battles to be waged. As a consequence, the High School's teachers are as bolted to their classrooms as the desks were in the era in which the American high school developed; religion happens in a church and education happens in a classroom.

At the High School, time rules all. Often, for the teacher, the time is too little; for the student, too much. Teachers can never cover all the material they must; many students--some of whom have as many as four study halls a day--speak of boredom. One innovation being implemented at the High School during our visit established an extra period two days each week for teachers to work with students on a more informal basis. Most teachers opposed the change because they lost six minutes from every other period. They needed those six minutes to "cover the material." At the Alternative, time seems less a tyrant to be obeyed than a resource to be exploited.

Subject matter is a concern of both student and teacher at the High School. The prescribed curriculum must be covered in the daily allotment of time. There is little time for side excursions on topics of interest. Such restrictions would seem to hamper the creative teacher and encourage students to assume only minimal responsibility for what they learn. Thus, students and, to a lesser degree, teachers feel little sense of accountability for what is learned or taught; it is someone else's requirement.

The Alternative's informal approach makes it relatively easy to tie subject matter to students' lives. While subject matter does have intrinsic worth, its chief value is the opportunity it offers for teaching more universal skills. The Alternative's teachers are less likely to follow assiduously a prescribed curriculum. The school's structure enables them more easily to make adjustments for the reading level of the student and for their and other students' interests and talents. The textbook is less likely to represent the primary source of information. A wider variety of materials with differing points of view--some chosen by the students themselves--is likely to be employed. Indeed, the standard textbook approach was largely absent in the classes we observed. In general, the Alternative's teachers exercise considerable autonomy in making these sorts of adjustments. The High School's teachers likely have a similar autonomy, but the structures of the institution in which they teach seems to discourage such initiatives.

Governance

The High School's governance structures tend to exclude students and even their teachers from important decisions about the life of the school. They establish a we/they attitude between students and teachers and, consequently, students tend to resist what they consider to be an imposed set of rules, regulations, and policies that govern their behavior. Since they have little role in constructing the structures that govern them, they naturally feel little obligation to conform to them. The incongruity of being told to behave as adults without being trusted with the basic tools to do so is all too apparent to most students. They may be prompted to engage in intricate games, displaying attitudes and pressing actions that clearly display their disrespect for the system but fall short of requiring serious reprimand.

Scale impacts heavily on governance practices. The town meeting, which continues to work well in a New Hampshire hamlet, is a ludicrous format in Boston. The larger the high school, the more difficult the task of enfranchising students and teachers. So it is in these two schools. The High School has a typical student council format. A few students play a much more direct role in setting direction through a committee structure that advises the principal on matters of student concern. The

Alternative contrasts sharply with this approach. Its fundamental governance pattern is the town meeting. These all-school meetings operate on the principle of one person, one vote. Students and teachers debate issues as equals. The level of trust in students the process requires is unimaginable in large settings. Implicit in the system is the presumption that students will act maturely and responsibly and will not misuse the power their overwhelming majority gives them. They apparently do not. There is a check mechanism: the principal can veto any decision that students and teachers make if, in his judgment, it endangers the school's existence. He has never had to exercise it.

Students' and teachers' involvement goes further. The life-blood of any school is its faculty. Hiring good teachers attuned to a school's philosophy is likely the most important set of decisions any school can make. In large schools, interviewing and hiring is usually the exclusive responsibility of the principal and his or her administrators. As scale increases, even the principal may relinquish this duty to the central administration. The Alternative carries its involving governance pattern even to staffing decisions. Each vacancy is filled by a hiring committee comprised of several students and teachers and the principal. No teacher that students have disfavored has ever been offered a position.

In many ways, school size seems to affect teachers even more than students. A major shift in a teacher's sense of making a contribution seems to occur when a staff gets too large to sit down and plan together, to assume their rightful share of responsibility in setting a direction for the school. When this shift occurs, the best of our teachers, those who wish to take responsibility for professional decisions, find themselves in an intolerable situation. They have become nothing more than hired hands, as Sizer (1984) calls them.

> Teachers are told the amount of time they are to spend with each class--say, fifty-five minutes five times a week. Even though they are expected to be competent scholars, they are rarely trusted with the selection of the texts and teaching materials they are to use, a particularly galling insult. Teachers are rarely consulted, much less given significant authority, over the rules and regulations governing the life of their school; these usually come from "downtown." Rarely do they have any influence over who their immediate colleagues will be; again, "downtown" decides. One wonders how good a law firm would be if it were given manuals on how to apply the law, were told precisely how much time to spend on each case, were directed how to govern its internal affairs, and had no say whatever in who the partners were. Teaching often lacks a sense of ownership, a sense among the teachers working together that the school is theirs,

> and that its future and their reputation are indistinguishable. Hired hands own nothing, are told what to do, and have little stake in their enterprises. Teachers are often treated like hired hands. Not surprisingly, they often act like hired hands (p. 184).

Teachers need to be convinced, of course, that any attempt to lead them into decision-making roles is not a mere subterfuge to manipulate them to arrive at what the principal already has in mind. They must experience their power as genuine or they will resent the time wasted making pseudo decisions. At the time of our visit, the High School's teachers had begun to resist the attempts of the principal to draw them into governance activities because they believed, rightly or wrongly, that he was engaged in a "con" game. Little in our experience with the principal would lead us to a similar conclusion; rather we found him generally open and forthright. What is it about this institution that promotes such perceptions? Governance matters almost certainly are contributing factors.

While the Alternative's teachers talk little about governance activities, they do participate in them with willingness and energy. Besides all-school meetings, formal time is set aside at regular intervals for faculty meetings. All faculties have meetings, but few can experience the sort of power sharing we witnessed in a meeting of this small group of teachers. They feel involved in the day-to-day decisions required to run a school and as a result appear to have much greater commitment to its success than they would otherwise. We attended a faculty meeting during our visit. The main agenda item was the planning of two parent information nights designed to inform families considering transferring to the school about its program. The apparent best process would have all teachers at the school for two long evenings near the end of the school year. The proposal caught the staff drained of energy and pressed for time. After a long discussion, the staff, to a person, reluctantly accepted the plan as "the right thing to do." As we imagine the reaction of the faculty in almost any large high school to this proposal, we envision it invariably failing. It would be seized as an opportunity for the workers to stand up for their rights and defeat management's "unreasonable" proposal.

Curricula and Programs

These two schools differ markedly in the curricula and programs they offer students. First, there are obvious differences in the size and diversity of the offerings. In one sense, the High School has a broader, more diversified curriculum in the staples of the American high school's offerings: English, mathematics, social studies, science and foreign languages. There are also the usual courses in music, art and physical education. Vocational education courses are available too at a nearby school but require a specialized schedule for those who

take them.

The High School is justifiably proud of its extra-curricular offerings as well. Its students, both individually and collectively, have won many awards for performances in music, fine arts, dramatics, and especially sports. Perhaps more than any other factor, these activities give the school its spirit and character.

A major advantage of the High School is its wide array of extracurricular offerings. One may point to many of these--sports for example--as latent contributors to the increasing size of high schools over the past four decades. In contrast, the Alternative has far fewer extracurricular activities. Its scale makes some highly improbable, even if its students favored them. Other activities are "hidden" inside the school's activity-oriented curriculum. Many non-classroom activities seem to find their way into the curriculum quite naturally, thus eliminating the prefix, "extra." For example, we talked to an eighth grader, one of a very few who had been granted special admission to the Alternative. She described a scenery design class she was taking--at the university! Theatre, a staple of the extracurriculum in most high schools, had been made the very core of her studies.

The Alternative, in one sense, offers a much narrower curriculum in all the subjects already mentioned. Especially absent are large music performance groups and organized sports. The Alternative's students do supplement its offerings by taking some courses at the High School or at the university. The existence of a major university a few blocks away and the availability of thousands of talented community people that cluster around it gives the Alternative many opportunities to diversify and individualize its program. To its credit, it exploits these resources as well as any school we have seen.

The High School, only a few blocks more detached, seems to view academic entanglements with the university as an administrative inconvenience and tends to limit them. They seem to add yet one more level of complexity to an already complex task. Unlike the Alternative, which has contrived a much lower advisor-student ratio, the opportunity to take coursework at the university is limited. Although some students can and do engage in the experience as early as the summer after their sophomore year, the privelege is primarily confined to seniors. Apparently, university enrollment is limited to the number of people one counselor can supervise, even if demand is greater. For example, we talked to a junior who required special arrangements because he was in the highest advanced placement class for seniors. He related that he had already read all the material for even that level of work. When he asked permission to take a course at the university, he was told that this opportunity was open only to seniors (unless the class was at a time outside the school day). The student transferred to the

Alternative and enrolled in the university class.

What we came to view as a paradox of the programs in the two schools centers on differences in the scope of their curricula. Our past experience with small high schools had led us to accept as a given that a price one paid for a small-scaled informal atmosphere was a reduction in program; a handful of teachers could not be expected to teach the kind of curriculum that could be offered by a large, comprehensive high school with its staff of perhaps 100 teachers. The Alternative has not yielded to that constraint. Its science teacher referred to her advanced chemistry class. We knew she only taught part-time at the Alternative and assumed she was describing a class at the High School. She was not. By scavenging discarded equipment from the High School and the university, she had amassed enough resources to teach advanced chemistry at the Alternative. The quality of the equipment caused high errors-of-measurement in experiments but she did not see that as a particular problem. Indeed, she saw the lab teaching a good deal of ingenuity as students learned to construct various experiments with the limited equipment at hand.

A key difference between these two faculties seems to be their definition of a minimal unit of instruction. At the High School, students told us that a class could not be offered unless there were 12 students interested in taking it. At the Alternative, the minimal unit of instruction is the individual. Another part-time Alternative teacher told us that teachers find ways to meet students' needs. A student related this incident to us:

> A girl came to [the principal] and said, "I don't want to go to school. I hate school; I want to be a model." And he said, "Alright, let's see what we can do to help you do that as quickly as possible."

The girl had a program designed specifically for her and she stayed in school. Several students at both schools related incidents of acquaintances who had transferred to the Alternative to pursue a program of study that was unavailable to them at the High School. These program transfers may have been prompted, not so much by a curriculum that is irrelevant, as by one that is inflexible.

Tracking and Social Cliques

The recent spate of reform reports suggests there is little value in the heavily tracked curricula found in most American high schools. The High School's multi-tracking does much to perpetuate many of the class distinctions found within the community. Tracking provides a formal structure which reinforces the cliques that exist among the students. That alone may be sufficient reason to abandon the tracking system. A detailed

description of the High School's cliques and how its program interacts with and reinforces them, exposes the importance of these issues.

There are four major cliques and several minor ones residing in the High School. They produce a highly stratified society. The major cliques are the Brains, the Jocks, the Hicks, and the Heads. Students, teachers and administrators all seem to know them, usually by the same names. The cliques are a well-established way of life--more accurately four different ways of life--within the school.

The Brains are the academically able students who are not only college bound but who engage in earnest preparations for college. They are serious students who are intellectually curious and work hard for high grades. According to one student's stereotype, they are the ones who wear "wire-rimmed glasses." Another student described a Brain as "someone who studies on the bus going on a field trip." Students seem not to make a conscious choice to be in this group, a factor less true of the other groups. They are simply acknowledged to be "Brains" because of the program in which they are enrolled and the unusual levels of conscientiousness they display. They are, in a sense, ostracized because of their achievement orientation. We were unable to talk to many Brains; they had few study halls (our primary source of student informants) and students we suspected to be Brains were regularly unwilling to sacrifice study time to talk to us. We, therefore, have little sense of their perceptions of the other groups.

The Jocks include many athletes, as their appelation implies, but this clique is not limited to them. It also includes cheerleaders and others deeply involved in the extracurricular life of the school. Another, and perhaps more descriptive, term for this group would be the Socialites. The students in this group are active socially and, as one student put it, "They have higher, upper class standards." Most have college aspirations. They try to do reasonably well academically, but that is not the main purpose for their being in this group. This distinction became clearer when we learned that the Preppies are a subgroup of the Jocks. The Preppies primary interest, again according to stereotypes related to us, is in being seen in the "right" clothes and with the "beautiful" people.

Another major group, the Hicks, is comprised mostly of rural farm youths, though one teacher who works with them insisted that many live in town. For the most part, they are enrolled in vocational agriculture or vocational technical programs. Because many of them spend only a half day at the high school and another half day at an area vocational high school and because they are "tracked" into a common set of classes in response to this scheduling, the school reinforces their group identity. The Hicks claim, for example, that they do not know about some of the

activities of the school because announcements are usually made when they are not there. One teacher claimed that the "Vocational Tech" students (the Vo-Techers are a subset of the Hicks) are "stigmatized" as "low achieving kids." In her judgment, the portrayal is inaccurate.

The Heads are an invisible group of students who allegedly are the "pushers" and the "users" of drugs. One teacher told us that a new student confided to her that drugs were more readily accessible than friends in the school. Apparently, the structure of cliques makes it difficult for a new student to break into these rigidly established groups. We learned less about the Heads than any of the other groups, perhaps because it is in their interest to remain "invisible," but our hunch is that many "deviant" or "eccentric" personalities are included in this classification, whether they use drugs or not.

Each clique distinguishes itself from the others by its manner of dress, the territory it occupies within the school, and by its lifestyle and habits. Apparently, in order to be identified with a clique, students have to wear the "uniform" for that group. The Hicks, for example, are distinguished by their heavy boots, Levi jackets, and visored caps emblazoned with a "CASE" or "FORD" or whatever logo.

The cliques, in part, may be a product of the social class stratifications of the neighborhood elementary schools which, in turn, may reflect the stratification in the larger community, a condition our study was not designed to document. Students reported to us that, upon reaching junior high, students from the same elementary school naturally banded together, in part, as a defense against the rebuffs of students from other schools.

In junior high, the curriculum begins to evolve into separate tracks and the age of the students (preadolescence) leads to concerns about identity. Social interests also emerge at this age and sports become a more significant activity. All of these forces are amplified as students enter the High School and cliques, which are probably largely dormant in junior high, emerge, thriving on the incoming student's need to belong.

There is remarkably little interaction between the cliques, each making conscious efforts to ignore the others. One student described the relationship as "tolerance" with an underlying current of "dislike." Others described the "tension" that exists between the groups. The interaction that does take place was invariably described in negative terms. Students from different cliques exchange "dirty looks," "verbal threats," and engage in name-calling. Fighting, once a more serious problem, has apparently decreased, perhaps as a consequence of the elimination of earlier, over-crowded conditions. One student told us that her boyfriend had gotten into a fight with one of the Hicks the year before and "the entire Hick population got down on him. . . . They would walk down the halls and hit him." The

situation became so bad that her friend finally transferred to the Alternative.

Feelings run high between the groups. When students from one clique speak of the others, they use terms like "druggies," "dummies," "stuck ups," and "snobs." Resentment of the Jocks runs especially high among the Hicks. One Hick described them in this way:

> They live right in this general area [a "nice" section of town] and they just run around with each other all the time. Their fathers are big businessmen; they belong to the racquetball club, and stuff like that. They don't get to experience anything like we do. We go out in the fields and plow the fields and do a lot of activities in the country.

Another student said that Jocks got to go out in the courtyard because "they're goody-goodies" who "brown-nose the principal." A third said,

> They won't be so big and high and mighty when they try to get a job off one of us--when we own our own business. Then they'll have to be nice to us, and we won't have to be nice to them anymore.

Significant numbers of students do not identify with any of the High School's cliques. These students see themselves more as an aggregate of individuals than as another group. They interact with acquaintances in various cliques, but many of them speak of being isolated and lonely. When asked what it was like not being in a clique, a student responded, "It means you eat lunch alone, you walk to classes alone, you go outside alone, and say, 'Hi' to a couple of people and that's it." Another student added, "And sometimes at lunch, you stand with them and talk with them and, at other times, they just ignore you."

Students who do not ally themselves with a clique may be especially vulnerable to being ostracized. We talked to several students at the Alternative who left the High School largely because of student harassment. One slight young man related being forced into several fights because of his long hair. The final blow occurred when he emerged from a shower to find his clothes submerged in a basin of water. He was floundering at the Alternative because his learning style was really better served by the more structured classroom setting at the High School. The Alternative's principal estimated that there were about 20 students in the program who had sought asylum in it despite academic needs that may have been better served by the High School's more structured academic climate.

Students and teachers at the Alternative did not mention cliques very often, and when they did or when we asked about them, students described than as small friendship groups that did

not exclude anyone. As one student stated, "We have cliques but they're not closed to other people or they don't cut down anybody or anything." Another student added, "It's more like a group of friends that decide that they like each other. . . ." A third student said,

> It doesn't mean that I can't come over and hang out with someone and talk to them. If I happen to wear designer jeans and they happen to be wearing cotton skirts, that's okay, you know. It's not closed; it's not even a clique; it's just like we're friends who hang out together.

A teacher confirmed,

> We don't have the strong cliques that [the High School] has. We do have cliques, but there's a lot more interaction [between them], and there's not the antagonism between certain cliques here [at the Alternative].

For us, the distinction between "closed" and "open" cliques or, as we would prefer to term them, tightly-bound and loosely-bound cliques is an important one, for the highly tolerant atmosphere of the Alternative encourages comparatively free and open communication between individuals and groups.

Character Education

That the Alternative's teachers are concerned with character education is clear, though they do not call it that. It was evident in at least two ways in the formal curriculum and supported by the hidden curriculum (i.e., the educational philosophy) of the school.

In the formal curriculum of the school, there is a period devoted to a wide variety of activities that occur in small, established groups called "Clumps." Similar, to the old homeroom concept in some respects, Clumps provide students and teachers a formally scheduled opportunity to interact at length about once each month free of the burden of covering subject matter. During these Clump days, these small support groups meet to see a film, debate an issue, discuss some aspect of school life, or offer assistance to one of their members. Sometimes, they simply go on a picnic together. When the school considered adding seventh and eighth grade students to its student body, the Clumps provided one forum for students to air their concerns about the change.

Clumps are not therapy groups led by untrained leaders, as critics of such programs have charged. They engage in a wide variety of activities and deal with a variety of issues and concerns: the environment, nuclear energy, women's rights, humane treatment of domestic animals, the killing of whales, and

so on. They function more as a very diversified assembly program carried out in discussion-sized groups.

The Clumps are supplemented by the availability of teachers to students throughout the day. The college-type schedule of this open-campus school permits teachers to respond to individual students on a regular basis. Much of the activity during these times is based upon classroom or subject matter issues, but a good portion is given to personal issues of students or just talking about world events. The informality of these contacts over time, tends to erode the usual barriers between students and teachers.

Control

One of the major differences between these two schools is the levels of control they exercise. The High School is in no way an oppressive environment. Were we not being sensitized to its control issues by the testimony of its students and the parallel experience of the Alternative, it would have seemed quite ordinary. Because of the contrast, we came to see the degree to which control issues impacted upon essentially every aspect of the school.

Most the High School teachers viewed control in terms of accountability and responsibility. As one teacher put it:

> I may be old-fashioned, but I think kids need direction. They need to be somewhere accountable for some reason. They need someone to tell them.

This view of students as needing external direction in order to function effectively as learners was a common theme. Many High School teachers appeared sincere in their belief that their students were not mature enough to handle much freedom and responsibility. These concepts were not something that could be taught over a period of time as one would teach algebra. The High School's teachers did not mention self-discipline as a goal. If asked, they would surely have been in favor of it. (Who can be against self-discipline?) Our sense of the situation is that they generally believe that most teenagers are incapable of it. In the context of a large high school, they are probably right. If anything became clear during our time in these two schools, it is the degree to which a large high school is incapable of fostering self-discipline. Given this handicap, the High School would likely be wasting its time in trying to foster it. A faculty constrained in this way is left with the difficulty of explaining its absence: Quite reasonably, they may presume that self-discipline is something that develops naturally with maturity; it is "caught" rather than "taught."

At the Alternative, control tends to be viewed as a developmental problem rather than as a security problem.

Teachers are concerned about providing a supportive environment in which students can acquire the skills and attitudes of self-control. In this sense, control seems more of a pedagogical issue at the Alternative than it is at the High School. As one teacher told us:

> I see us intentionally set up to insure that just about every kid has access to an adult that, for the most part, has good judgment. . . . We do a lot to support kids because we're smaller and almost every staff member has a chance to meet every kid. . . . We get to see the little changes, the little developmental things.

Most Alternative students held a similar view, as shown by the following exchange:

> Interviewer: Do you find that it's easy to goof off because you are on your own?
>
> Mary (5): Yeah, it is. It's very hard when you're downtown or something and you have a class and people are saying, "Come on, let's do whatever," and you know you have a class and you're not sure you should go back. . . . You know you should, but you don't know if you want to.
>
> Jim: It just takes discipline, self-discipline.
>
> Mary: Yeah, definitely. You have to have a lot of self-discipline, but if you can do it, it's great.
>
> Jim: And the school helps administer a little self-discipline if you get behind. Like I started skipping classes a lot and the teacher and my parents and me had an emergency counseling session where we talked about it and then I stopped skipping.

The High School's students see control and order almost exclusively in terms of restrictions (something being imposed on them), deprivation (the removal of privileges and the loss of freedom), or punishment for getting out-of-line:

> Jill: I think they're a little too rough. Like they won't let you go out to lunch. School lunches are okay, but they're not great, and sometimes I like to go out to lunch.
>
> Interviewer: That's a recent change isn't it? Why was that change made--from an open to a closed campus?
>
> Bob: People were abusing their rights. It was kinda hard when people were leaving school and stuff to keep track of them and a lot of kids just wouldn't come back for

their classes.

Interviewer: Going out and just not coming back?

Bob: Skipping class and stuff. And they figured it made it a lot easier keeping everyone in the building so they could keep track of them.

The closing of the campus two years prior to our study presented an interesting situation for the analysis of control. The change was forced, in part, because of parental pressure. Since all of the reference groups (students, teachers, and administrators) compared control issues across the two eras, we had an excellent basis for understanding their attitudes toward control. Moreover, since the Alternative was still an open campus school, we could compare and contrast the attitudes of teachers, administrators, and students in each school.

During the open campus period, the High School's students were permitted to leave the school grounds for lunch and at other times when they did not have class. Moreover, they were not required to attend study halls. The High School now requires students to remain on the school grounds during the school day unless they have written permission to leave. A written request by parents is required to get permission unless the student is 18, in which case, he or she can make the request directly. Students are also required to be in assigned study halls.

One generalization that seems safe to make is that the High School's teachers are in agreement with the return to the closed campus. One teacher put it this way:

> I don't know whether they [the students] changed in their attitudes--the way they look at the school--but I do see a change. Things are quieter around here since they initiated the closed study hall.

Another teacher stated the contrast in the following way:

> During the open-campus period, students were permitted to congregate in the lobby if they had a study hall. They could go to the cafeteria; they could go to the library; they could move around; they were not responsible for their actions--really--I mean as far as having to be somewhere.

One teacher thought that the shift to a closed campus came none too soon.

> I felt, at one time, that the school was going to blow up. They [the students] had set fire to a bulletin board and one girl had her hair set on fire. . . . I had a great fear that something really drastic was going to happen.

Except for one or two other references to vandalism, however, this was the only teacher with whom we talked who viewed the lack of control as a safety threat to persons in the school.

Most of the High School's students with whom we talked resented "being punished" (which is how they viewed it) for someone else's mistakes (the class before them that could not or did not handle the open campus well). They disliked "being in prison" and the return to the closed campus with its mandatory study halls, its restrictions on leaving the building and the security guards who patrolled the school's grounds. The latter had become a visible symbol of the restrictions they now had imposed on their lives and, we suspect, prompted many of the "prison" analogies we heard. Moreover, they believed that it was a small minority of students (teachers and administrators agreed) who were unable to handle the increased freedom and responsibility that the open campus required.

Students, teachers, and the principal at the Alternative take a different and essentially common view of their open campus, illustrated by the following dialogue with students:

Interviewer: You mentioned that the community views this school as a weird place. I've been in a lot of alternative schools around the country and a lot of times the community is concerned with something it calls "control", and they see alternatives as out-of-control places. Would you comment on whether you feel there is control in your school and, if so, what it is.

Mary: I think a lot of people consider they have control over kids when they lock them in a building for seven hours and I just think that's crazy, you know. You don't give them responsibility; you keep them in a building and make them go to study halls and they could have free time.

George: Control is directly related to honesty in student-teacher relationships and the amount of control a student senses is trying to be inflicted on him relates to how honest he's gonna be about what he's actually doing. At [the Alternative], there is less control and you can say to your teacher, "I've got a problem. I went out and did this and this," and most likely, the teacher will say, "Well, that's a problem. Why did you do it?". . .They're looking for the problem, not just treating symptoms.

Ann: People say there's bad control at [the Alternative], but I think it's just not as apparent as it is at [the High School]. At [the High School], people are either in classes or in study hall and there's nobody in the

> hallways at any time during the day. At [the Alternative], you can go wherever you want as long as you don't have a class. But if you start screwing up, then you hear about it. If I started skipping my classes and stuff like that, then a meeting would be called with my parents and teachers to decide what the problem is and not just give detention. . . . It's like you have as much responsibility as you can handle and if you can't handle it, it's taken away from you for a while. But you start out having it.

One Alternative teacher put the concept this way:

> I think we have some new students coming to us that are not really sure quite how to act. I think they have to be educated towards that cooperative attitude rather than that control attitude.

Both schools report few instances of serious problems: fighting, vandalism, stealing, and drug abuse. Apparently, there was a time, about two years prior to our study, when fighting was a problem at the High School. As one of the administrators said "I think we can pretty clearly document that [a reduction in the number of fights]." He attributed the decrease to ". . .taking a pretty tough stance on kids fighting." The school's expulsion procedings against seven students who eventually withdrew is one example of that stance.

The incidence of fighting was also quite low at the Alternative. As a student said,

> One strange thing about the school is we've never had a fight. In the existence of the school, there's never been a real fight here.

While the statement has the ring of exaggeration, fighting was clearly not an issue in the school.

"Knowing where kids are," a problem identified by the High School's staff, was not mentioned at the Alternative. This does not mean that the Alternative's teachers are disinterested in the whereabouts of their students, but suggests to us their willingness to trust that, wherever they are, they are not up to mischief. When inappropriate behavior occurs, the Alternative's staff does seem to deal with it, but it does not try to prevent it through tight surveillance. The High School is much more likely to want to know where students are in order to prevent misbehavior from occurring and, perhaps additionally, in response to its sense of accountability to the community. This community, like many, probably views control as a fundamental task of the High School. Low control may be viewed by it as mismanagement.

Performance

The Alternative is referred to widely in the community as "the school for druggies and dropouts." Very little correspondence exists between the school's image in the community and its reality. The Alternative's students report that drug use at their school is no different than that of the High School. Since many have also attended the latter, their assessment seems credible. The "dropout" portion of the school's image is certainly unfounded. Table 2 summarizes the scores of these two schools on a battery of evaluation instruments, several of which suggest the levels of achievement of their students. These are not, strickly speaking, achievement data for individual students. Rather, they are composite data that form a profile of an entire school. The norm group for the percentile ranks used to report results to the schools is comprised of essentially every high school in the state.

The Alternative's assessment scores, ranging from the 30th to the 99th percentile across the two testings, were superior, not only to the highly-reputed High School's scores (10th to 99th percentile), but to virtually every other high school in the state. The Alternative does have a smaller class size than the High School, largely due to its encouragement of independent learning and volunteer teaching and its open campus which frees its teachers from many caretaking duties, but that strikes us as an inadequate explanation for these large differences. Clearly, the Alternative's informal environment has not been developed at the expense of academics.

Discussion

That two schools so very different can be tolerated in the socio-political framework that is American public education is heartening. The seeds of renewal cannot only be sown in communities such as this one, they can flourish. New forms of the high school can be implemented, given a modicum of courage and insight on the part of a community's policy makers. We trust that point is clear from the foregoing presentation.

What is less easy to convey are the differences in the sense of personal involvement and commitment we felt repeatedly in conversations with participants in the two schools. the Alternative is not Utopia, but its problems tend to be "owned" by the entire school community rather than attributed to some segment of it. Martin Buber's I-Thou relationship (1958) is alive and well at the Alternative. Its principal does not do things <u>to</u> teachers who do not do things <u>to</u> their students. Some closing observations about several elements of the social climates, programs, and performances of these two schools seem in order.

Table 2

State Evaluation Scores for the Two Schools

Learning Goal	Percentile Ranks			
	High School		Alternative	
	1981	1982	1981	1982
1. Self Esteem	45	50	99	99
2. Understanding Others	55	80	99	99
3. Reading	75	99	99	99
4. Writing	80	95	99	99
5. Mathematics	95	99	99	99
6. Interest in School	65	80	99	99
7. Societal Responsibility	50	80	99	99
8. Knowledge of Law and Government	90	95	99	99
9. Health and Safety Practices	10	50	90	30
10. Creative Activities	85	90	99	95
11. Career Awareness	90	95	99	99
12. Appreciating Human Accomplishments	65	75	99	99
13. Knowledge of Human Accomplishments	90	95	99	99
14. Information Usage	75	99	99	99
Mean Scores	69	84	98	94

Social Climate

Governance. Regarding the governance issue, most people, students and teachers included, want to feel that they are responsible agents of their institutions and not simply there at the whim of someone else. DeCharms (1976) makes the distinction between what he terms origins and pawns. Origins are in control of their lives. They make things happen; they take responsibility for their acts; they are powerful in a positive way. Pawns have no sense of being in control; they are controlled by others, they have no internal compass providing direction. Under the control of others, they are driven first this way and then that, like a piece of driftwood at sea. Pawns (from the old French peon meaning foot soldier) are expendable; they can be used in the game of chess to gain a strategic position; they have little intrinsic value. Healthy origins are what we claim we want our citizens to be in this democratic society, and it is what the vast majority of people want for themselves as well. Governance structures in schools move both students and teachers in one direction or the other.

At the High School, most students and even some teachers experience themselves as pawns. Virtually all students with whom we spoke experience themselves as more or less under the control of others. They are told what to do and when to do it. In the case of teachers, control is less the issue than professional autonomy. Many teachers see the principal, for example, as manipulative and authoritarian. One teacher described a petition that had been circulated accusing the principal of usurping teachers' responsibilities as professionals. Those circulating it most certainly are pawns aspiring to be origins or origins who resent being treated like pawns.

Cliques. Regarding the strong cliques in the High School, we offer three possible explanations for the extreme differences we saw in boundry setting in these two schools. One explanation, the sizes of the schools, centers on the concern of adolescents about personal identity. In a small shool, one's identity can emerge out of the many interactions with others. The numerous opportunities for one-to-one interactions with adults who see this as an important facet of their job is probably signficant to their development. The Alternative's environment is a very friendly and supportive one, an environment conducive to exploring and constructing a unique identity.

A second possibility is that the larger, more impersonal environment of the typical American high school is not so much harsh or hostile as it is uncertain. In such an environment, adolescents have difficulty constructing a comfortable identity. Perhaps, at the High School, the cliques give students a relatively safe and easy way out--join one and acquire an instant identity--which, if not acceptable to everyone, is acknowledged as legitimate by sufficiently large numbers of peers to establish one's selfhood.

Yet a third explanation is that the Alternative has no tightly-bound cliques because it has a more homogeneous group of students. Tolerance is a much easier virtue to attain when the range of values to be tolerated is narrow. At the High School, the Jocks and Hicks are the two most antagonistic factions. Indeed, besides establishing the rules of membership in their own groups, perhaps because of their sheer size, they seem to be the prime definers of the other groups in the school. We sensed that some of their members take comfort in being able to summarize this intricate social fabric in such simple terms. It, again, seems to make their world manageable. Clearly, this mechanism is not a healthy way to develop toward adulthood. Because cliques likely do more to retard personal growth than they do to foster it, they work against the High School's efforts in this area.

Since several of the goals of schooling, according to Goodlad (1985), have to do with social, civic, and cultural competence, the High School's hidden curriculum, especially the message conveyed by its system of tracking, does more to teach values--for example, intolerance for others--that are inimical to those in the formal curriculum than any other aspect of its program. We do not believe, of course, that the elimination of tracking in and of itself would do away with these cliques. They are a product of the scale of the school and the stratification of the community that is only reinforced by the High School's curriculum.

Teacher-Student Relationships. Two vehicles of the Alternative--Clumps and open scheduling--manifest an educational philosophy that values greater and more informal contact between teachers and students. Besides giving teachers another avenue for discovering students' interests and needs, informal contact is educative in other ways. A point that is made as a follow-up to a classroom discussion may "take" more readily when it is offered in this informal way. But how do these vehicles for informal, affective education build character? First they permit teachers to serve as role models to students as they work through the problems of growing up. They also give teachers numerous opportunities, on a private basis, to constructively address such issues as responsible behavior, tolerance for others, honesty and hard work without preaching and, more importantly, without embarassing a student in front of his or her peers. These matters can be addressed naturally in the circumstances in which they arise. As a result, relations between students and teachers in schools like the Alternative are freed of much of the game-playing found in other schools.

Control. Control issues seem to be at the very core of the differences in the social climates of these two schools. The schools offer different reasons for control problems? The most frequently mentioned ones form a useful summary of the discussion of control.

The professional staffs of both schools agree that some problems would be reduced or disappear with the smaller, more personal environment of the Alternative. The High School's teachers tend to think in terms of security--fewer students are easier to watch and keep track of--while the Alternative's teachers think in terms of maintaining strong relationships and personal contact as ways of preventing behavior problems.

The High School's teachers sometimes posited the principle that adolescents are simply not ready for much freedom. Obviously, most of the Alternative's teachers and its principal do not accept this rationale since they regularly give students significant amounts of freedom. To the extent that they do accept the principle, they likely think of it as something that can be changed by giving students opportunities to mature, not as something fixed and immutable. If control problems are evident in the Alternative, most teachers probably view them as symptoms. They likely attribute them to weak relationships. In a strong relationship--one with a high level of trust and respect--control problems diminish or disappear. The Alternative's teachers likely view the compulsiveness of adults (in a large school) as one reason for control problems. A compulsive staff sets unreasonable standards of behavior and they exert greater levels of control in their attempts to achieve those standards. The High School's teachers, in turn, likely view the Alternative's laissez faire stance as a reason for its students' occasional difficulties in using their time wisely. The students sense that they can get away with little effort so they do not exert themselves very much.

Program

While our study focused on social climate issues, a number of programmatic issues also surfaced. Several of these observations can be termed ironic.

First, the long-acknowledged ability of the comprehensive high school to deliver a rich and varied program is, in part, a myth when compared with this alternative school. A number of students leave the High School to attend the Alternative in order to pursue courses of study not available at the former. A key difference in the two programs is that the high school's minimum unit of instruction is 12 students while the Alternative's is one.

Second, the curricula of these two schools seem to be moving in opposite directions, one contracting as the other expands. As resources and staff diminish, the High School's program contracts commensurately. The Alternative responds to the problem, in part, by finding additional ways to tap community resources, especially those of the university. While the High School had recently moved its sophomore class to an intermediate high school across the street, the Alternative was making plans to extend its

student body downward to include seventh and eighth graders, a change that has since been implemented. One program sees a solution to its overcrowding and, perhaps, its complexity in eliminating its youngest, least responsible students; the other sees expanding its age range as adding a richness and diversity that offer increased opportunities for older students to take on new responsibilities: helping the young.

Third, attitudes toward "post-holing" approaches to learning appear to be quite different in the two schools. The High School tends to view the approach as a privilege for talented, trustworthy students who have already established breadth in their learning. The Alternative tends to view it as an approach appropriate for some learning styles and as a useful motivational device for many students. Like most American high schools, this high school's curriculum is conceived around standard group instruction: one teacher, working with 25 or 30 students, progressing systematically through a body of prescribed content. Teachers in this school see covering content to be so central to their responsibilities that an innovation that removed six minutes from each 48 minute class period two days a week was perceived as a serious hardship. In such an environment, breadth of coverage takes precedence over depth. Students with interests that pull them toward the latter are an unsettling complication.

Fourth, regarding individualized learning, both schools consider an individual student's readiness for independent experiences before permitting them to occur. Scale almost certainly affects the "risks" each school is ready to take with marginal scholars. Its small size keeps the Alternative's problems with some students' progress in independent efforts manageable where the large size of the High School poses a latent danger of "things getting out of hand." The High School's staff may be justifiably wary of opening up the process to all takers. As a result, the Alternative, with its limited resources, ironically appears able to foster scholarly experiences for a larger proportion of its students than does the High School despite the rich expertise of its well-trained, specialized faculty. The High School's culture, with its emphasis on control and order, hobbles its curricular potential in this area.

Fifth, what used to be called the hidden curriculum and we choose to call the "lived" curriculum conveys much of the richness in the Alternative that is missing from the High School's program. The Alternative has not established this program and these achievement levels at the expense of the social climate of the school. The school's program effectively rebuts the idea that youth will not work unless they are made to.

Sixth, these two schools differ in the extent to which they attempt to help students make sense of their world. "Relevance" has become a cliche, but the pedagogical importance of the concept has not diminished. Even the reformers, particularly Goodlad and Sizer, stress it. The informal environment that is

possible in a small school lends itself nicely to the development of personal meaning. Values can be clarified through discussion and personal contacts. The content-oriented, formal curriculum of a large school is not well-suited to this goal. To construct personal meanings through the curriculum, students must be actively involved in probing and reflecting on the issues under discussion. While the High School's teachers undoubtedly lead some excellent discussions, the informal opportunities to pursue a point or extend thinking are limited for most students. The general climate of the school, with its tight schedules and lack of time for individual contact between students and teachers, robs both groups of such rich opportunities.

Performance

Despite its superior achievement scores, the Alternative continues to have the reputation of being a haven for "druggies and dropouts." Very little correspondence exists between the school's image and its reality. The school scores presented in Table 2 are difficult to explain in the context of this image. The school also has what many view as a more difficult group of students with which to work, a point acknowledged by one of the High School's assistant principals. Yet, when we discussed the Alternative's impressive evaluation scores with an evaluator in the state department of education, he discounted them as unrepresentative results because of the school's "specially selected, unusally talented student body." Can these two diametrically opposing views of this student body both be correct or are we confronted with a school culture so different from--and so much more potent than--the typical American high school's that it renders even well-established norms invalid?

A Closing Comment

It seems, if a school is conceived in ways that enable it to make a serious effort to build a sense of community among all of its participants and to incorporate a commitment to individuals in both the curriculum and other aspects of school life, that the entire environment encourages the achievement of character goals. The resulting sense of community can be far more than the rah-rah spirit of a football rally. It can be caring about the needs and interests of the other members of the community whether they be students or teachers and having a structure that makes acting on the basis of these values a natural process.

Endnotes

1. This research was supported in part, by the Maris-Proffit Endowment of The School of Education, Indiana University.

2. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of public high schools satisfy the descriptor of "small," but only a few dozen have taken the important next step and have consciously worked to develop a cohesive school culture. Most of these small public high schools are alternative schools. Some prefer to term them public schools of choice, in part, because of the degree to which "alternative" was first identified with the private free school movement of the late '60s and, in part, because of the degree to which the term "alternative" has been more recently applied to the dumping grounds that many school systems and even entire states have created for "problem students." The alternative school described here is a purposefully different form of education, freely available to every student in the community. Its heterogeneous student body reflects that policy.

3. We wish we could acknowledge the state in which this study was conducted and cite a source for this comprehensive battery of evaluation instruments. Unfortunately, the community described here is quite unique within its state. (It is <u>not</u> our home state, Indiana.) Were we to name the state, we would risk exposing the identity of the two participating schools.

4. Because the database from which standard scores were calculated also included the almost 100 schools in 21 states we had collected at that point, these two schools' scores also give a good indication of their standing in relation to this national sample.

5. Names attributed to interviewees are all fictitious.

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